

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 002262

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EB/TPP, EUR/WE AND IO/T

STATE PASS USTR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SCUL](#) [KIPR](#) [ETRD](#) [FR](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: FRANCE STRENGTHENS PUSH FOR "CULTURAL EXCEPTION"

REF: Paris 2231

NOT FOR INTERNET DISTRIBUTION

Summary

11. (SBU) France has ramped up its efforts to influence UNESCO-sponsored discussions on a Convention on the Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Contents and Artistic Expressions ("Cultural Diversity Convention"), which it apparently sees as a vehicle to strengthen the "cultural exception" to international trade law. First, France will host the EU Council and Commission Presidents for a two-day conference on May 2-3 to promote a Charter for a Cultural Europe (and the French "cultural exception"). Next, France will support NGOs and other professional groups at the Fourth International Meeting of Cultural Professional Organizations in Madrid, May 9-11, which will be attended by members of the cultural lobby, key negotiators in the UNESCO talks as well as political leaders and government officials. Finally, in a move that caused some discomfort in EU circles, France will co-host a meeting of Culture Ministers in Madrid, June 11-12, at which it plans to press for special treatment of "cultural goods." The GOF continues to look for allies wherever it can find them in its drive to get a Convention adopted at the October 2005 UNESCO General Conference. END SUMMARY.

THE GOF AGENDA

12. (SBU) The GOF will continue to promote aggressively its longstanding support for a "cultural exception" in trade matters at the EU Culture Ministers' meeting in June. The GOF is expected to push for an EU public document that:

- Affirms the allegedly special nature of "cultural goods and services." Previous UNESCO normative documents contend that "cultural goods and services" play a dual role in that they have economic importance, but also serve as transmitters of cultural values. ;

- Emphasizes the sovereign right of States to adopt measures to protect and promote "cultural diversity" (

- Reiterates the fundamental role of "cultural diversity" to support sustainable development, particularly in developing countries; and

- Urges that rights and obligations of the UNESCO-sponsored Cultural Diversity Convention should be superior to those in other international legal instruments.

13. (SBU) Comment: The UNESCO-sponsored discussions have not produced a definition of "cultural diversity." Some, including the United States, stress the important role of cultural diversity within a country, while others seem to view national culture as unitary and contained within national boundaries. Despite the presence of a sizeable Muslim minority, largely of North African descent, the GOF seems to tend toward the latter view. End comment.

14. (SBU) France will take this same message to the Fourth International Meeting of Culture Professional Organizations to be held May 9-11 in Madrid. The meeting's panels will feature members of the cultural lobby, NGO representatives, key negotiators in the UNESCO cultural diversity talks, as well as political leaders and government officials. France previously hosted a meeting of the International Liaison Committee of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity (ILC) January 26 and 27. The second UNESCO meeting to discuss the "cultural diversity" Convention took place January 31-February 11. The dates of the Spanish meeting, organized by the Spanish Coalition (i.e., the Spanish chapter of the ILC) have been "deliberately chosen," according to a press release by the Spanish coalition, apparently to attract maximum media and political attention in the run up to the third UNESCO meeting to discuss the Cultural Diversity Convention, which is scheduled for May 23-June 4.

15. (SBU) The ILC meetings have gained in international stature over the years. Previous ILC meetings were held in

Montreal in 2001, in Paris in 2003, and in Seoul in 2004. These meetings attract culture professionals from 21 national member countries, including Argentina, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Spain and, recently, Slovakia. Other members are in the process of joining: Hungary, Mali, Cameroon, and the EU.

16. (SBU) The French, Spanish and Brazilian governments are coordinating on the organization of the Culture Ministers' meeting on the UNESCO Convention in Madrid, June 11-12, 2005. The Ministers of Culture from France, Spain and Brazil issued the invitations from Paris on March 21. We understand some EU member states were upset that they were not consulted about French participation in the meeting. At the meeting, France will call for greater "cooperation and solidarity" with developing countries.

17. (SBU) In addition to its commitment to the adoption of the UNESCO Convention by the fall of 2005, France favors a "Charter for a Cultural Europe," to be discussed during a meeting in Paris May 2-3, in the presence of European Council President Jean-Claude Juncker, and EU Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso. French Culture Minister Donnedieu de Vabre regards this meeting as another opportunity for the EU to reaffirm its support for cultural diversity, "a commitment which is also a written obligation in the current Treaty on the European Union, and which is addressed in the European Constitution." The meeting, announced March 31, was not coordinated through EU channels, though several member states are participating.

PROMOTING FRENCH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

18. (U) Less publicized but equally important to the French strategy is the steady efforts to promote the use of French in international fora. France works through the International Organization of Francophonie (IOF) and its permanent representatives in the U.N. in New York and Geneva, in the African Union, in Addis-Ababa, and in the EU in Brussels. In the last two years, it has revitalized the IOF, which now claims a membership of over 50 countries in five continents. France also works to maintain French as a working language in the European Union.

19. (U) The budget of the IOF remains modest at 227.1 million euros. Over 86 million euros finance TV5, while another 83 million go to the Intergovernmental Agency of Francophonie, which promotes the use of the French language. Although there are 175 million French-speaking people in the world, they report the use of French is increasing on the African continent and in the Middle East but stagnating elsewhere, or even declining in the Caribbean, particularly in Haiti. The IOF reports that the French international television network TV5 is the second largest global network behind MTV but ahead of CNN. With 40 million listeners, Radio France Internationale is the world's third largest station behind BBC World and voice of America. French-speaking countries represent 15 percent of global trade.

REACHING OUT TO THE SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE

110. (U) The 10th Summit of Francophonie in November 2004 adopted a road map over the next decade, which lays out the promotion of the French language and cultural and linguistic diversity as the first of four priorities over the next decade. In 2001, five international organizations, including the Organization of Spanish-American States, the Community of Portuguese-speaking countries and the Latin American Union, took part in the Third Ministerial Conference on Culture organized by the IOF in Cotonou, Benin. The conference, attended by government officials, artists and members of civil society, also served to rally members on the French "cultural exception". The conference produced a book entitled "Cultural diversity and globalization," which, in turn, inspired the Universal Declaration on cultural Diversity adopted in UNESCO in November 2001

SPEAKING FRENCH IN THE EU

111. (U) The French also have pressed hard this year and last on the use of French in the EU, focusing on the new member states such as Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, and a web site on Francophonie specifically aimed at those countries was launched (www.parlez-francais.com). In preparing the enlargement of the European Union, the IOF's main operating body, the Intergovernmental Agency of Francophonie (IAF), developed a plan signed by France, Belgium and Luxembourg to provide French-language training to some 6,255 civil servants from new member states between 2003 and 2004. Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic have

joined the IOF as "observers," the first of three stages towards membership. The need to maintain French as an official and working language in the EU was strengthened by several meetings in July 2004 with EU Foreign Affairs Ministers and potential candidates to the membership of the IOF. Since early 2000, the IOF has also reached out to the Arab world and the Spanish and Portuguese "linguistic areas" to achieve greater cultural diversity.

12. (U) Current membership stands at 53 associate members and 10 observers. Greece and Andorra have recently become associate members, and Armenia, Croatia, Austria, Georgia, Slovenia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary have observer status. The GOF is said to be pushing for Israel to join ranks, but Lebanon opposes such a move. Israel is a large market for French media exports, such as books and films.

13. (SBU) COMMENT. The UNESCO-sponsored negotiations over the "Cultural Diversity" Convention have seemingly sparked the GOF to become better organized and financed in its efforts to promote its views on cultural matters. The GOF does not want to include language issues in the Cultural Diversity Convention, perhaps in accord with its apparent view that cultural diversity is something that happens between nations, not within them. Nonetheless, its language and culture programs are also benefiting from a more dynamic effort.
LEACH